

Rock Castle,
on Berry Lane,
 $\frac{3}{4}$ mi. E. of Hendersonville, Tenn.

HABS No. TENN-131 HABS
TENN.
83-HEND.V

2

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Tennessee

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
CENTRAL UNIT—ST. LOUIS

Historic American Buildings Survey
J. Frazer Smith, District Officer,
Goodwyn Institute Bldg., Memphis, Tenn.

ROCK CASTLE

On Berry Lane, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile east of
Hendersonville, Tennessee

PHYSICAL DATA

Wall construction: Roughly dressed limestone.

Size and form: Rectangular, two stories with one and one-half story ell.

Porches: Wooden; front of Greek Revival period, rear possibly original.

Exterior openings: Most of the original doors and window sash remain.

Interior

The interior woodwork has been well preserved. In one room of the ell is a complete panelled end wall with fireplace, cupboard and two doors. The panels are small in size and the mouldings vigorous in profile, giving a middle Georgian effect. The northeast room on the first floor has large panels in natural finish wood, probably dating from the early 19th Century.

Outbuildings: An old spring house and smokehouse--both of stone--are still standing on the place.

All in all, the house is very early for the locality and remarkably complete. A set of measured drawings in this case should be detailed and comprehensive. I believe it is one of the most important examples in the Mississippi Valley.

Prepared by Charles E. Peterson, December 31, 1940.

Charles E. Peterson,
Senior Landscape Architect.

TW 5/20/41

ROCK CASTLE

TENN.

83. HEND. V

On Berry Lane, 3/4 mile east of Hendersonville, Tenn.

2-

Historical Data

Year of erection: "According to family legend, the foundation of Rock Castle was paid in 1784 by General Daniel Smith on a land grant given him for his services in the Revolutionary War. Owing to the constant depredations of the Indians the house was seven years in being built."*

Built for (first owner): General Daniel Smith.

Built by: "The original builders, seven in number, were massacred, and others less skillful had to be secured to replace them."*

Original intended use: Residence.

Notable events and occupants: "General Smith, besides holding many positions of trust, was appointed by George Washington secretary of all the territory south of the Ohio River and was an early United States Senator. He died at Rock Castle in 1818, and is buried in the family cemetery."*

*Reference: History of Homes and Gardens of Tennessee, compiled by The Garden Study Club of Nashville, Mrs. John Trotwood Moore collaborating. Ed. by Roberta Seawall Brandau. (The Parthenon Press, Nashville, 1936.) pp.277-79.

Prepared by

Ida B. Guild

September 15, 1940.

Ida B. Guild

Historic American Buildings Survey

Rock Castle (General Daniel Smith House)
Indian Lake Road
Hendersonville vicinity, 3/4 miles east of
Hendersonville
Sumner County
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-131

4000
1000
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Addendum to:

Rock Castle
Berry Lane
1/4 miles east of Hendersonville
Sumner County
Tennessee
(as recorded in the 1940s)

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

HABS
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ROCK CASTLE
(General Daniel Smith House)

HABS No. TN-131

Addendum to:

Rock Castle
Berry Lane
1/4 miles east
of Hendersonville
Sumner County
Tennessee
(as recorded in the 1940s)

2 data pages were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress

Location: Indian Lake Road, 3/4 miles east of Hendersonville, Sumner County, Tennessee.

Present Owner: State of Tennessee.

Present Use: Unoccupied but contemplated as museum and research center.

Significance: Built by General Daniel Smith, a pioneer of Tennessee, Rock Castle was the first of three stone houses to be erected in Sumner County. Reminiscent of the simple homes of the Eastern Seaboard from which General Smith had come to Tennessee, Rock Castle represents a transitional element in frontier Tennessee architecture and construction. It is among the first important houses in the State to reflect a measure of architectural planning.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Although evidence is insufficient on the establishment of the house's construction dates, the approximate dates are 1784-1797.

Construction proceeded slowly because of problems with Indians, lack of skilled workmen, and a scarcity of readily available and usable building materials.

By 1793 work had progressed somewhat. Mrs. Smith wrote to her husband on July 20, 1793, that Captain Smith Hansborough had stopped sawing wood for the interior, and that Indians were still making trouble ["Rock Castle," American Historical Magazine, Vol. V, No. 4 (October 1900): 200; see also Tennessee Historical Society, Collections, Box S. I, No. 93, S., at the Tennessee State Library and Archives, Manuscripts Division].

On the same day, Hansborough himself wrote to Smith and reported that the walls were about one foot above the window sills, the frames for the first floor were already in, and he was working on assorted joists, lintels, and window frames. He mentioned also that he would "try to get the 'L' part finished..." [loc. cit.]

In a letter dated September 15, 1793, Hansborough writes that one side of the "L" was level and ready for the roof joists, while the other side was as high as the windows [loc. cit.]

The exact date on which Rock Castle was completed is unknown. Available records do not give such specific information. Daniel Smith conveyed 305 acres of land to Smith Hansborough in 1796 [Sumner County, Land Records, Book I, p. 292]. This transaction may conceivably reflect Smith's payment to Hansborough for services rendered upon the completion of the house. Such payment by land to builders of houses was not unknown in this area [building contract between W. Montgomery, owner, and R. Taylor, builder, reproduced in Durham, The Great Leap Westward, pp. 144-145]. However, the basis for this particular conveyance is unknown and can only remain the subject of speculation in the absence of more precise documentation. The earliest known reference to Rock Castle in a habitable state comes from Governor John Sevier's Journal, in which he records arriving at Rock Castle on the evening of May 24, 1797 and staying all night [Dewitt, "The Journal of Gov. John Sevier," Tennessee Historical Magazine, V (1920): 236].

2. Architect: None documented or assumed. General Smith is presumed to have conceivably designed the house. However, no plans, which may have been drawn for such a project, have been located. It should also be observed that Smith's library, which was substantial, is not known to have contained any architectural or pattern books whatever.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Prior to its sale to the State of Tennessee in 1969, ownership of General Daniel Smith's estate, on which Rock Castle still stands today, passed through five generations of the family. As such transfers were not always conveyed through legal instruments of record, the chain of title is based in part on family history.

Following the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783, General Daniel Smith received a land grant of 3,140 acres which was given him for service in the war [NCDB Deed Book 1, p. 5]. Here, he erected Rock Castle.

Upon General Smith's death in 1818, the estate passed to his wife in accordance with his will, which gave her "the lower part of the tract of land on which I live containing from the best estimate I can make of its quantity Fifteen Hundred and Ten acres. . ." [CCCOSC Will Book 1, pp. 267-273]. Mrs. Smith lived at Rock Castle until her death, at which time her son, George Smith, assumed ownership of the estate.

When George Smith died in 1849, his son, Henry (known also as Harry), moved into Rock Castle.

Henry (Harry) Smith died in 1888, and his son-in-law, Horatio Berry, and daughter, Nannie Smith Berry, moved into Rock Castle, where they resided until 1893.

From Horatio Berry, ownership of Rock Castle passed to his wife and subsequently to his son, Colonel Harry S. Berry, who deeded the property to his sister upon his death [CCCOSC Will Book 14, p. 404]. On May 8, 1969, the members of the Berry family sold the parcel of land on which Rock Castle presently is situated to the State of Tennessee [ROSC Deed Book 276, p. 85].

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: General Smith appears to have signed no contract with the men he hired, and available account books that he kept shed no further light on this matter. For this reason, the precise origin, number, and function of the craftsmen whom he employed for the construction of Rock Castle remain unknown.

General Smith's sister, Mrs. Peter Hansborough, had two sons, Peter and Smith, who are known to have come to Sumner County from their home in Philadelphia to work on the construction of their uncle's home [Delaney, "A Historical Study of Rock Castle." p. 14]. Judging by the correspondence that exists between Hansborough and General Smith, it seems plausible to assume that the former was in charge of construction and that he was also a prime carpenter for the job. The Hansboroughs recruited local help, though their number and identity are unknown. However, a William Stamp is known to have worked on the erection of the stone walls for the house [S. Hansborough's letter to Gen. Smith, 20 July, 1793, cited above, and Mrs. Smith letter to her husband of the same date, also cited above].

A family tradition recalled by one of General Smith's collateral descendants maintains that the original stone masons and carpenters were from Philadelphia, but that they were all killed by Indians and no replacements were further to be had from that city. Subsequent workmen were employed from the area and were less skilled, accounting for the flaws in workmanship [Interview with Miss Sarah C. Berry].

While Philadelphia's being the source of craftsmen for Rock Castle is certainly plausible, in view both of General Smith's known active association with the city and of the fact that it was the home of the Hansborough brothers, no documents are available to amplify or substantiate this tradition. Furthermore, it is clear from records of various transactions between the brothers and their uncle, that Peter and Smith Hansborough survived well beyond the initial period of construction. At the same time, it is interesting to cite another source regarding the origin of the workmen; it relates that ". . . at least two of the seven original workmen brought in from Lexington, Kentucky, were killed by Indians before it [Rock Castle] was completed in late 1793 or 1794." [Durham, The Great Leap Westward, p. 37 (referenced incorrectly to Brandau's History of the Homes and Gardens of Tennessee, p. 277). No documentation has been found to substantiate the latter claim.

Whatever the origin and number of the workmen, the conditions prevailing during the period of construction would make it seem likely that when a worker was killed or injured, he was replaced by a man who probably was less skilled than his predecessor. Such generally have been the conditions for construction in any frontier at any point in the history of this, or any other state or nation.

Rock Castle was built from native limestone obtained from the quarry opened for that purpose by General Smith a few hundred yards from the site ["Rock Castle," American Historical Magazine, Vol. V, No. 4 (October, 1900): 293].

It is known that an almost virgin forest abounded around the site on which Rock Castle was erected. It is therefore reasonable to assume that any lumber necessary may well have been cut from trees of many types that were thus to be had in the area.

Andrew Nicholson, who operated a store in Manchester, Tennessee, appears to have been a likely source for building materials that may not have been available in Sumner County or the surrounding area. A list of goods purchased from Nicholson has survived, and sheds some light on this possibility [Tennessee Historical Society, Collections, Box T, no. 68 (see Appendix)].

5. Original plans and construction: No plans or drawings of any kind have been located.

The house, which has survived to the present day devoid of substantial modifications, was laid out in an inverted "L-shape" plan. The stem of the "L" contains four rooms; both the disposition of its rooms and its corresponding expression in the

final architectural form is rather crude. The first floor contains four rooms and a central hall with a stairway, and it is a typical example of the simple Georgian houses along the Atlantic Seaboard. The second floor is similar in plan of the first floor. The basement presently contains three rooms, and is very likely the area in which the meals were prepared and the household supplies stored.

No documentation of any kind has yet been uncovered to clarify the circumstances in which the interior of the house was executed. Like the exterior, it survives to the present day with only a few modifications, the most notable of which is the rich marblizing finish that was painted on the inset panels at some later date. The scheme of the interior is simple and reflects that characteristic of simple Georgian houses. The walls and fireplaces in the first floor are all adorned with the central mantle, overmantle, and side cabinets -- all set within an integrated wood-paneled wall. However, the design and execution of this paneling throughout the house, as well as the mantelpieces and the stairway in the hall, gives reasonable evidence to speculate that the craftsmen who produced them were not conversant with the "proper" details employed fastidiously in the more formal counterparts along the East coast. They would seem also to suggest both the absence of any books or patterns to which they might have referred in the course of the work, and the corresponding possibility that they were proceeding on the basis of conjecture -- either their own or that of General Smith, who may conceivably have attempted to recall similar details in houses previously familiar to him in Virginia.

The limestone for walls, as has already been noted, was quarried on the site. The joists and rafters were cut from oak and cedar; the rafters were marked on each side correspondingly with Roman numerals, easily formed by straight saw cuts across the width, indicating that they were cut and fitted together on the ground, numbered on each side, and finally put in place. This practice was widespread in the area.

Most of the interior woodwork, including the wood paneling around the mantles and cabinets and the stairway, appear to have been made of black walnut. The door and window architraves were made of hewn poplar. The floors were of wide ash boards. The roof shingles were riven of cedar [Durham, op. cit., and interview with Miss Sarah C. Berry, corroborated by a personal cursory inspection].

6. Alterations and additions: Several changes have been made to the house. The information that follows records these changes.

Some time between 1825 and 1849, during the lifetime and ownership of General Smith's son, George, the exterior of the house was remodeled. The front wooden porch, representing the growing taste for the Greek Revival style, was added at this time; there is reason to suppose that, originally, there was a window on the second floor where there now exists a door opening out to the second level of the porch [Delaney,....p. 31]. The wood porch at the rear of the house replaced in recent years by a stone slab porch, is presumed to have been added at the same time [Miss Sarah Berry, interview].

In 1886, the original cedar shingles were replaced by a slate roof [Miss Berry]. The slate roof has caused the rafters to bend appreciably under its weight.

Electricity was installed in the house sometime during the 1940s [Miss Berry].

In 1953, the Tennessee Valley Authority substantially raised the water level that created the present Old Hickory Lake; much of the Smith tract was condemned and flooded over in the process [Declaration of Taking, ROSC Deed Book 155, p. 327]. It was at this time that most of the substantive changes were performed on Rock Castle. The floor of the basement of the house, originally tamped earth, was done over with a concrete slab. Dirt fill was used to raise the land level around the house, to an estimated depth of 1-1/2 to 2 feet toward the rear of the house. As a result, concrete box staircases, with concrete walkways, were added to the two basement entrances to form a transition between the original door and the ground floor level, now raised approximately one foot above, and to provide some protection from rising water.

In 1959, the rear upstairs bedroom in the leg of the "L" was renovated: gypsum board was placed over the original plaster wall, and the side walls of the staircase were repaired [Miss Berry].

In 1964, a stone slab porch, with a wood roof, was built at the rear of the house, replacing the old wooden one which had deteriorated [Miss Berry].

It should be observed that the louvered shutters are not original. They were probably installed around the middle of the nineteenth century. It is likely that original shutters were made of solid wood panels set into a simple frame, not unlike those employed in area houses of the period, owing to the constant threat of Indian attacks.

- B. Historical Context: Born on October 29, 1748, in Stafford County, Virginia, Daniel Smith became a pioneer of the State of Tennessee.

A graduate of William and Mary, he became a surveyor by profession. He married Sarah Michie, of the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and settled in Augusta County, Virginia, on the Clinch River at Fort Christian, where he received an appointment as Deputy Surveyor in 1773.

In 1774, Smith was a Captain in the Colonial troops and was Company Commander in Lord Dunmore's War. In 1775, he signed the Fincastle County Resolution protesting against the oppressions of the British Government. In 1777 he helped organize and became a Major in the Washington County Militia. Two years later he was appointed Commissioner by Governor Thomas Jefferson to work with fellow Virginian Dr. Thomas Walker and representatives from North Carolina to extend the boundary line of the two States westward to the Mississippi. In 1781 he became Colonel of the Washington County Militia and participated in the Battle of King's Mountain.

With the end of the Revolutionary War, Smith settled in the Cumberland settlement, in what is now Sumner County, near the present town of Hendersonville, Tennessee; within the year, he had begun construction of his house, Rock Castle. He was a member of the first Davidson County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions in 1783. The following year, the North Carolina Legislature designated Smith surveyor for laying out the town of Nashville. In 1785 the legislature appointed him a trustee of Davidson Academy, the first institution of learning chartered in the Cumberland country. In 1787 the North Carolina Legislature made him Commissioner of the newly organized Sumner County; in the following year, he was appointed Brigadier General of the Mero District Militia.

Daniel Smith was a member of the North Carolina Convention which ratified the United States Constitution in 1789. When President Washington appointed William Blount as Governor of the Territory of the United States South of the Ohio River, General Smith was made secretary and was frequently Acting Governor in Governor Blount's absences from the territory.

In addition, Smith was the first to publish a map of Tennessee. In 1793, Mathew Carey, a bookseller in Philadelphia, published Smith's A Short Description of the Tennessee Government, or the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio along with the map of the State as developed from his actual surveys. The map was used in Gilbert Imlay's A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America, published in London in 1797.

In 1796 Smith was chairman of the committee charged with drafting the first Constitution for the State of Tennessee. A year later he was a presidential elector from the new State and was appointed in 1798 to fill out Andrew Jackson's unexpired term in the United States Senate, following Old Hickory's resignation. He did not seek immediate reelection, but was a successful candidate for the Senate in 1805, serving through his resignation in March of 1809.

In view of Smith's numerous substantial, though unheralded, accomplishments, it seems fitting to conclude this historical vignette on the man with the testimonial made by Thomas Jefferson, who observed that "Daniel Smith was a practical surveyor, whose work never needed correction. For intelligence, well cultivated talents, for integrity, and usefulness, in soundness of judgement, in the practice of virtue and in shunning vice he was equalled by few men, and in purity of motive excelled by none." [Quoted in McKellar, Tennessee Senators, p. 113].

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A simple residential structure of the late 18th century. Common double-hung windows and gable roofs are used. There are porches on the front and rear sides. The predominantly simple interior includes paneled cabinets and walls.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The two-story, L-shaped house measures 62'-9" x 51'-2".
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Walls: Quarried stone, natural gray finish.
4. Structural system, framing: Hand hewn truss, notched and pegged.
5. Porches: Two-story pedimented porch at the main entry. Stone slab porch on the back side.
6. Chimneys: One each at east and west ends of the main part of the house. One large chimney over the back part.

7. Openings:

- a. Doors: The main entry door and the front second floor door have paneled doors and jambs.
 - b. Windows and shutters: First floor windows are 12/12 double-hung. Second floor windows and 8/8 double-hung. All have stone flat arches and keystones. Replacement shutters are used.
8. Roof: Slate-sheathing under modern shingles is circular sawn. Metal gutters and downspouts are used. Dormers are on the back part of the house.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The entry hall contains the main stairway to the second level. Off of the entry hall to the east is the library. The parlor on the west leads to the dining-kitchen and the south chamber. The second level over the main part contains two bedrooms and the half story over the back part contains recent partitions to utilize attic space.
2. Stairways: The main stair in the entry hall is of simple design made of cedar. A small winding stair is in the dining room, on the east wall. Another small winding stair in the second level hall leads to the attic.
3. Flooring: 1-1/4" x 5" tongue-and-groove hardwood flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Wood lath and plaster. Plaster ceiling.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Six panel doors with artificial graining on panels. Simple door surrounds.
 - b. Windows: Simple trim and sills.
6. Decorative features and trim: Dining room, parlor, library and east bedroom all have paneled door cabinets. The cabinets are built next to or between the fireplaces.

There is an interesting paneled wall on the south wall of the dining room (HABS photo TN-131-22).

There are also baseboards, chairrailing and wainscoting in the house.

7. Notable hardware: Early hinges are H-L type with small square leather washers between heads and hinge.
8. Mechanical equipment: Modern.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces north. Old Hickory Lake shoreline is within thirty five feet of the smokehouse which is south of the residence.
2. Outbuildings: Smokehouse is situated south of the house. (See also separate HABS file: Rock Castle, Smokehouse, HABS No. TN-131-A).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

The oldest available photograph of Rock Castle is owned by Miss Sarah C. Berry and presently hangs at her home, "Hazel Path," in Hendersonville, Tennessee. The photograph was taken in the 1890s and shows the front and east views of the house. Among items of special interest revealed in this photograph is a glimpse of the wood porch at the rear of the house. Also in Miss Berry's possession are additional photographs of the house, providing the same general view, that were taken in the 1930s; some have been reproduced in publications listed below.

Two publications provide significant photographic coverage of Rock Castle. The first is the History of the Homes and Gardens of Tennessee (Nashville, 1936), pp. 277-279. The second work, Cochran's Grandeur in Tennessee (New York, 1946), pp. 23-26 provides photographs whose scope and detail is especially useful.

Mr. Charles W. Waterfield, Jr., Architect of the firm of Cooper and Waterfield, Architects, of Nashville, Tennessee, took a number of photographs of Rock Castle in conjunction with a rehabilitation project involving the structure for which he was commissioned by the Tennessee Historical Commission.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

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Prepared by: Anatole Senkevitch, Jr.
HABS Historian
Summer 1970

Roy A. Pledger
HABS Architect
Summer 1970

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This 1970 project was undertaken by the National Park Service in cooperation with Tennessee Historical Commission and the Historic Sites Federation of Tennessee. Under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, the project was completed by the following people: Roy C. Pledger (Texas A&M University), Project Supervisor; Anatole Senkevitch, Jr. (University of Virginia), Architectural Historian; student architects Robert J. Dunay (Virginia Polytechnic Institute), William H. Edwards (University of Illinois), Donald W. Graham, Jr. (University of Illinois), and Donna G. Woodrum (Virginia Polytechnic Institute).

Susan McCown, HABS Architectural Historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in the Summer of 1985, for transmittal to the Library of Congress.

The photographs of the house were taken in August 1970 by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer.